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DON FRANKLIN/BONN

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OSTPOLITIK SITUATIONER

ANNCR:

THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR FINDS WEST GERMANY CONCERNED MORE WITH ITS DOMESTIC THAN FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS. BONN'S OSTPOLITIK IS NO LONGER AT THE CENTER OF THE STAGE OF POLITICAL EVENTS, AS WE HEAR IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM DON FRANKLIN IN BONN...

VOICE:

THE FACT THAT THE SPOTLIGHT HAS BEEN TAKEN OFF OSTPOLITIK DOES NOT MEAN THAT THERE NO LONGER IS MOMENTUM IN BONN'S DRIVE TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE. RATHER, OSTPOLITIK IS TAKING A BACK SEAT TO DOMESTIC POLITICS IN AN ELECTION YEAR IN WEST GERMANY, ESPECIALLY SINCE BASIC TREATIES ON NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES OF EUROPE HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONCLUDED.

BUT IN CONTRAST TO THE SITUATION THREE YEARS AGO -- WHEN WILLY BRANDT WAS ABLE TO SCORE A MAJOR ELECTION VICTORY RIDING ON A WAVE OF SYMPATHY FOR HIS FOREIGN POLICIES -- THIS TIME OSTPOLITIK THREATENS TO HURT RATHER THAN HELP BONN'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT AT THE POLLS. PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS HAVE SHOWN THAT AS WEST GERMANY'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS INCREASED TO THE POINT OF ONE-MILLION UNEMPLOYED, THE POPULARITY OF BONN'S OSTPOLITIK HAS DECREASED. AND CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT'S RECENT AGREEMENT TO GIVE POLAND ALMOST ONE THOUSAND MILLION DOLLARS IN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, DESPITE HIS DIFFICULTIES IN BALANCING THE GERMAN BUDGET, HAS NOT RECEIVED MUCH POPULAR SUPPORT. THE OPPOSITION PARTY, IN FACT, IS STILL SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING

BLOCKING THE NEW POLISH AGREEMENTS WHEN THEY COME UP FOR RATIFICATION IN THE UPPER HOUSE OF THE BONN PARLIAMENT NEXT MONTH. MR. SCHMIDT ALSO IS ON THE DEFENSIVE IN EXPLAINING HIS DECISION LAST MONTH TO PAY EAST GERMANY HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO RENOVATE THE LAND TRANSIT TRAFFIC ROUTES FROM WEST GERMANY TO WEST BERLIN.

BUT OSTPOLITIK HAS LOST ITS GLOW AMONG THE WEST GERMAN POPULATION FOR MORE THAN MERE FINANCIAL REASONS. THE OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS THAT REMAIN TO BE SETTLED MAKE HEADLINES MORE OFTEN THAN PROGRESS MADE. FOR EXAMPLE, CONCLUSION OF THREE BILATERAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN WEST GERMANY AND THE SOVIET UNION ON SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL COOPERATION AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE HAS BEEN HELD UP FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS BY MOSCOW'S REFUSAL TO HAVE THEM APPLY ALSO TO WEST BERLIN, EVEN THOUGH THE FOUR POWER AGREEMENT STATES CLEARLY THAT BONN MAY REPRESENT WEST BERLIN'S FOREIGN INTEREST. AND JUST LAST MONTH, EAST GERMANY AGAIN MADE NEGATIVE HEADLINES WHEN IT WAS DISCLOSED THAT EAST BERLIN ALLOWS ADOPTION OF CHILDREN OF EAST GERMANS WHO TRY TO FLEE TO THE WEST RATHER THAN PERMIT THE CHILDREN TO REJOIN THEIR PARENTS ONCE THEY ARE RELEASED FROM PRISON.

BONN'S OSTPOLITIK HAS REACHED ONE OF THE MOST ROCKY STRETCHES OF THE ROAD: THE POINT AT WHICH GENUINE INTEREST IN ACHIEVING DETENT IS BEING PUT TO A TEST. AND IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT THE WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT WILL NOT PUT THE SPOTLIGHT BACK ON ITS EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH EASTERN EUROPE BEFORE THE ELECTION IN OCTOBER.

GH/CAK